

Chapter 234 Seven Years

At the mention of Bradley, the murmurs grew louder, and everyone's eyes turned to Sabrina.

Feeling the weight of the many eyes on her, Sabrina hesitated, then confirmed with a nod. "Yes, Bradley's a friend of ours."

A mix of awe and envy, the person asked, "Could you maybe get Bradley's autograph for me?"

"Me too! Please I'd love one."

"I'd be so grateful if you could get one for me as well."

"I'd love one too, Bettie."

Before Sabrina could respond, Bettie reassured everyone. "Sure thing! Leave it to me!"

"Bettie, you're the best!"

"Thanks so much, Bettie!"

"You and Bradley must be really close, huh? He brought you here himself."

A shadow of bitterness clouded Lance's eyes.

The crowd was buzzing, all focused on Bettie.

When Elora caught sight of this moment, a touch of envy flickered in her eyes, and she squeezed her fists with intensity.

Why?

Why did Bettie always seem to outshine her, whether it was with their peers or with Lance?

What did Bettie have that she lacked?

Amid the chatter, another voice piped up. "Bettie, are you friends with

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Amid the chatter, another voice piped up. "Bettie, are you friends with other celebrities too?"

Holding back a hiccup, Bettie began, "Oh, yes! I know quite a few like..."

She was about to tell them the name of the celebrities.

Sabrina swiftly interjected, "Bettie, have you had enough to eat?"

"I'm full." Bettie changed the topic. "Where's the wine? Any more wine around? I feel like another drink."

"You've had enough; it's time to head home," Sabrina said.

"But I want another!" Bettie's voice wavered as she rubbed her temples and reached for Sabrina's arm. Her vision was clearly blurry.

"Enough," Sabrina firmly replied, standing and attempting to lift Bettie. "We need to head home."

"Come on, Bettie seems keen to stay. Maybe just a little longer?" one of the classmates chimed in.

With a hint of mischief, Bettie gazed up at Sabrina and declared with a pout. "I'm not ready to go. I need another drink!"

Exasperated, Sabrina bent down to whisper, "Do you want Elora and Lance witnessing your messy drunken antics?"

The mere thought of embarrassing herself in front of them made Bettie reconsider. With newfound clarity, she declared, "No! Alright, let's head home!"

"That's right!" As Sabrina helped her, she informed their peers, "Bettie's had a bit too much. We're heading off now."

Others nodded understandingly, but not without a reminder. "Hey Bettie, remember Bradley's autograph!"

"Of course! I've got it in mind!"

Reaching the underground parking, Sabrina assisted Bettie into the back seat, mentioning, "We're going to pick up Jennie. Feel free to nap back there if you need to."

Bettie didn't say anything.

After leaving the room, a sudden wave of sadness washed over her.

Later in the drive, as Sabrina focused on the road, a soft whimper caught her attention.

Glancing through the rearview mirror, she saw Bettie, tears streaming

down her face.

Sabrina's heart raced as she nearly missed braking for the upcoming red light. "Bettie, talk to me. What's going on?"

In all their years of friendship, Sabrina had never seen Bettie shed tears so profoundly.

Through her tears, Bettie whispered, "Why did he return? After leaving so decisively, why come back?"

Sabrina remained silent, letting her speak.

It was clear that running into Lance tonight had resurrected painful memories from years past.

For the three years Sabrina had known Bettie, Lance's name had never crossed their conversations, as if he was a stranger.

Bettie had always been the embodiment of joy, energy, and optimism every time they met over the past few years.

Everyone harbored some pain, but Bettie chose to lock hers away, presenting a brave face to the world.

Those old wounds might have stayed concealed, lost in the recesses of her heart, if not for tonight's reunion.

Now, Sabrina pieced together why Bettie loved scrolling through pictures of attractive men online, and why she opted for male servers to keep her company over drinks and songs, yet never genuinely gave her heart to someone.

Perhaps she hadn't moved past Lance, or maybe the hurt was so deep that love seemed like a far-fetched dream.

"In the past... I was so patient, and so understanding from the start... I wished for him to stay, but he left anyway... He's been gone for seven years. Why did he come back now?" Bettie's voice broke amidst her

sobs.

Hearing her friend's voice quiver with pain was gut-wrenching for Sabrina.

Bettie's never looked so upset before, at least not in her eyes.

Seven years ago, Bettie was in college.

"Sabrina, you can't grasp how deeply I love him. Even when my family wished for me to study overseas, I resisted, wanting to be near him. I convinced them to let me remain. But then, out of nowhere, he chose to leave, leaving no room for discussion. And even if he returned, why now? Why did you happen to appear in front of me?"

Bettie's voice trailed off, her words becoming softer and more indistinct, making it difficult for Sabrina to hear clearly.

Eventually, she reclined in the back seat, her face streaked with dried tears and her lips moving in a faint murmur as sleep took over.

Arriving at Wanda's place, Sabrina carefully stepped out of the car to pick up Jennie.

She whispered a heads-up to Jennie. "Bettie's asleep in the back. You can take the front seat tonight. Just be quiet inside the car."

Jennie gave an understanding nod.

They then made their way into the residential area and parked in the underground garage.

Gently nudging Bettie, Sabrina said, "Bettie, time to wake up. We've reached home. Let's get you to bed."

After a couple of nudges, Bettie finally blinked open one eye and stretched, her eyes shimmering with tears.

Peering out the window, her drowsy voice mumbled, "We're home already?"

"Yes, let's head up and you can rest more," Sabrina responded.

"Alright," Bettie said and got out of the car slowly.

Once inside the elevator, Bettie leaned against the wall and shut her eyes.

It looked like she was really tired and sleepy.

The elevator eventually halted with a soft ding.

As Bettie fluttered her eyes open, she was met with Sabrina's gaze, full of concern.

Puzzled, Bettie inquired, "Why are you staring at me like that?"

"I worry you're taking this to heart."

Raising an eyebrow, Bettie responded, "Taking it to heart? Do you really think I'm that weak? Would I be upset over Elora and Lance? You're giving them too much credit!"

Sabrina found herself at a loss for words.

Bettie was the one who had been shedding tears in the car earlier.

Yet, it appeared that sleep had wiped that memory clean.

Perhaps it was best she didn't remember.

Sabrina always preferred the bold and unapologetic side of Bettie.

"I'm glad you're not hung up on it, but..." Sabrina said.

"But what?"

"According to Elora's logic, if you truly wanted to overshadow her, you'd need a boyfriend who's not just superior to Lance, but one who could make him rue his choices. Ever thought about that?"

Bettie frowned and thought for a while. "But where am I going to find someone who's a step above Lance?"

Lance was their class valedictorian, an alumnus of the prestigious Mathias No.1 High School, and held top-tier university qualifications. Rumor had it he'd been thriving overseas in recent times.

That success might have bolstered his confidence to return.

Plus, he was quite the looker.

The people who accomplished things like him didn't look as good as he did.

And those who looked as dashing as him rarely matched his accomplishments.

After mulling it over, a name sprang to Bettie's mind. "Well, there is someone..."

Sabrina eagerly inquired, "Who?"

Bettie paused briefly, then said, "Tyrone."

Sabrina was speechless.



Chapter 235 Is Tyrant Uncle Tyrone

Grasping Jennie's hand, Sabrina and Bettie exited the elevator.

As Sabrina fished for her keys, Bettie remarked, "You know, people like Tyrant have all the allure to be chased by many. It wouldn't be surprising if they turned out to be scumbags, with all the attention they get."

Unlocking and pushing the door open, Sabrina responded, "Can't argue with that."

"Speaking of which, how are things with Trevor? He seems like a good match for you. But if he ever messes with you, don't hesitate to kick him to the curb." Then Bettie lay down on the sofa.

"We're still talking. He's been swamped lately," Sabrina replied in a calm tone.

Next to them, Jennie perched herself on the couch. When the adults' conversation waned, she asked, "Does Tyrant mean Uncle Tyrone?"

"Uh..." Sabrina was embarrassed for a moment.

"Why nickname Uncle Tyrone as Tyrant?"

Bettie explained, "You see, Jennie, it's because your uncle sometimes easily falls for others' gossip, sort of like those gullible kings from old stories. Get what I mean?"

Jennie appeared to agree, though she seemed ready to defend Tyrone. But recalling Sabrina's previous advice, she held her tongue.

After freshening up, Bettie retreated to her bedroom.

Sabrina, after a brief gaming session with Jennie, got ready for bed as

well.

As they settled down, Sabrina, holding Jennie close, casually inquired, "Has Karen's grandson gotten any better?"

"He's still unwell. I spoke with her today. She mentioned he's grappling with a severe bout of pneumonia."

"That sounds concerning. I'll go visit Karen tomorrow," Sabrina proposed.

"I want to go, too." Jennie gazed at Sabrina with hopeful eyes.

"No. You are still young. What if you get infected?"

Jennie gave a sulky look and murmured, "I'll wear a mask. Can I please visit them? You're the best, Aunt Sabrina!"

She nestled her head into Sabrina's embrace, seeking comfort.

Sabrina felt a tug on her heart and almost caved in. "No, Jennie, sweetie. Your grandma isn't too fond of me. If something happens to you under my watch, she'll have even more reasons to keep you away. Do you get what I'm saying?"

Jennie's face said it all; she clearly grasped the situation. Lowering her voice, she conceded, "Alright."

When Friday morning dawned, Sabrina roused from her sleep, somewhat disoriented. Reaching for her phone, she checked the time, noting it was eight sixteen.

She also saw a new message.

Upon unlocking her phone, she identified the sender as Darren.

Excitedly expecting some updates, Sabrina's hope quickly deflated upon reading his message.

Darren's message read, "I truly regret this. Reaching out to you took immense courage on my end. I'm genuinely sorry, but I cannot proceed

further with our deal. I'll cover the stipulated penalty in our agreement. Again, I'm truly sorry."

A cold chill coursed through Sabrina, as if she were enveloped in frost.

It wasn't like Darren to back out without an apparent reason. Something was definitely wrong.

Could it be that those involved had sensed someone probing into that year's incidents?

After a moment of reflection, Sabrina composed herself and typed, "What's the real reason?"

"I've gotten two death threats this past week," Darren revealed.

He forwarded two images. One displayed a menacing message, while the other showed a note smeared with bloody handprints.

Darren kept on explaining, "Even after the first threat, I wasn't bothered. I carried on with my investigation and then got the second threat. Then, my wife, my parents, and even my in-laws got threatening messages too."

Aware of his line of work as a private investigator, Darren always made sure to keep his family's details concealed, but the fact that even this was uncovered sent chills down his spine.


Darren further explained, "I genuinely apologize. If I were the only one at risk, it'd be different. But putting my family in harm's way? I can't do that. I'm sorry."

His reasons were sincere.

Respecting his decision, Sabrina responded, "I get it. I appreciate all you've done for me. We'll proceed as per our agreement."

"I'm truly grateful for your understanding. Rest assured, your secret is safe with me. I hope you uncover the truth and get justice for your father soon," Darren assured her.

Sabrina simply replied, "Thank you."

After sending her message, Sabrina was consumed by her thoughts. 

If they managed to uncover details about Darren, would they also discover things about her?

Yet, she hadn't received any threats.

Perhaps it was because only she knew of the link between her father's passing and the kidnapping case.

Nobody else knew, and since they assumed she wasn't aware, they didn't connect it to her. They simply believed Darren was looking into the kidnapping case for a different purpose.

Now with Darren's trail going cold, her only lead was Trevor.

Despite her plan to get closer to Trevor, she couldn't shake off her underlying unease around him. It was always Trevor making the moves.

But in the past few days, Trevor seemed indifferent to her.

She couldn't continue like this.

Determined, Sabrina dropped a message to Trevor. "It's almost been a week. How are things at your end? Too busy at work?"

Her phone screen remained lit, awaiting Trevor's response. With no immediate reply, she switched off the phone and set it aside.

But as she turned, she was met with Jennie's curious, wide eyes.

For some reason, Sabrina felt an inexplicable sense of guilt.

Clearing her throat, she gently tousled Jennie's hair and said, "Awake already? Rise and shine when you're ready."

"Alright," Jennie responded.

At breakfast, Sabrina closely watched Bettie, noting that she seemed just fine, a realization that eased her worries.

Sabrina reminded, "Don't let it slip your mind to get Bradley's

autographs."

Bettie smacked her forehead, exclaiming, "I'll forget it if you don't tell me! I'll reach out to Bradley for those signatures right away."

Given their closeness with Bradley, it was no trouble asking him for a few autographs.

One of Bettie's classmates curiously inquired if she knew other famous faces, clearly hoping to gather more autographs.

Luckily, Sabrina chimed in just in time, or else Bettie would have been swamped with requests.

Upon checking Facebook, Bettie noticed a friend request.

When she glanced at it, she spotted an unfamiliar Facebook account with a cat profile picture and the name "Long Time No See."

The accompanying message was blank.

Bettie wasn't a fan of people who beat around the bush and completely ignored him.

She then messaged Bradley, sending him an emoji and writing, "Bradley, could you spare some autographs for me? My classmates are eager. Thanks!"

Bradley's response came promptly. "Sure thing. When will you collect them?"

"Hmm... Would the Golden Phoenix Performing Art Awards ceremony work?" Bettie proposed.

She was to be a featured makeup artist for the event. It was a rarity for celebrities to have dedicated makeup artists for such occasions.

Bradley was expected to be present that day too.

"Sounds good," Bradley replied.